

**Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 4:
“AN ACT CONCERNING CONNECTICUT’S FUTURE HOUSING NEEDS”**

Dear Members of the Housing Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Ada Fenick; I am a pediatrician working at Yale School of Medicine in New Haven, CT, where I see patients and teach future physicians. I am a resident of New Haven, CT. I am writing on my own behalf and for my patients, and not on behalf of the Yale School of Medicine.

I stand in **support** of SB 4: AN ACT CONCERNING CONNECTICUT’S FUTURE HOUSING NEEDS.

Every day in our clinical practice, we see patients who have lost their housing because their family can no longer afford to pay the rent. We know what this housing insecurity looks like: Families needing to move more often, families needing to double up with relatives, family members needing to separate, families using hotels, cars, and shelters for temporary housing. What happens when children lose their housing? What’s the effect on their futures?

Education suffers: when students’ housing situations become uncertain, their opportunities to focus on school work, extracurricular activities, and healthy relationships with peers become impacted. Some children end up moving far enough away that they end up having to change their schooling. All of this results in increased student absenteeism, decreased student engagement, increased need for social work and school counseling services, and decreased extracurricular opportunities for students.

Health suffers: when children’s housing situations become uncertain, they not only suffer the immediate effects of loss of medications, worse follow-up with clinicians, and heightened family stress, but they are exposed to the long-term effects of toxic stress which can include heart disease, diabetes, substance use, and psychiatric disorder.

Clearly, children’s education and health should be paramount as we work to build a strong state. This bill is humane and it represents an investment in the future of the state of Connecticut. **I support SB 4, and I ask the committee to support and pass this legislation to safeguard housing for the sake of the children of Connecticut, with the following suggested changes:**

- The cap should be lower—I suggest 2% to 2.5%. This tracks pre-pandemic average rent increases and would be affordable and predictable to tenants. The current cap means a hike of over 10% this year – which could double rent in 7-8 years. Families are already spending well over 30% of their budget on rent – increasing rent so much over inflation means that families will be paying 40, 50, or even 60% of their budgets within a small number of years.
- The cap should cover apartments in between tenants so landlords can’t push out tenants to increase the rent. In other words, this rent rise should stay with the apartment, not the tenant.
- The law should include stronger protections for tenants. A rent cap should not mean that tenants should be forced to live with vermin, mold, or other health-threatening conditions. Landlords must keep the apartments safe and secure, and this should be strengthened within the law, including higher fines for noncompliance with housing laws.

Thank you for your time,
Ada Fenick, MD
New Haven, CT